

NCOs Lead the Way ... Safely

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Soldiers who wear the chevron stripes of the noncommissioned officer on their sleeves represent a unique Army strength. Today's NCO is the front-line trainer and role model for our Soldiers and the motivating force for driving down accidental losses. The dedication of our NCOs is largely responsible for this past year's success in accident prevention. As a former NCO, I'd like to share my thoughts on responsibility and ask you to be vigilant so our Soldiers will be safer than ever.

"No one is more professional than I—the Noncommissioned Officer, leader of Soldiers."

An ammunition platoon received a fragmentary order to quickly move to another position. In their haste, they decided to skip the safety briefing. The NCOs failed to brief the convoy route, catch-up speed and hazards of night movement. They also failed to ensure their Soldiers were using seat belts. In the confusion brought on by the rushed departure, one vehicle's driver lost sight of the lead vehicle. His vehicle hit a guardrail and overturned, and three passengers suffered neck injuries. Is this an example of a leader of Soldiers?

"I am proud of the NCO Corps and will at all times conduct myself so as to bring credit upon the Corps ..."

The speeding automobile ran off the road and slid sideways almost 200 feet. The car flipped twice and hit a tree, killing both occupants who weren't wearing their seat belts. The drunk driver was an off-duty NCO. Is this an example of bringing credit upon the NCO Corps?

"Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind—accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers."

As the number one cannoner knelt in front of his howitzer's breech to close the firing lock, the howitzer fired, striking him in the face. Was competence the watchword of this gun chief?

"All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership."

As we came through the ranks, our NCOs taught us the meaning of discipline, leadership and standards. We must pass that knowledge along. Effective leaders identify hazards in night movements and take the proper steps to mitigate those hazards. Teaching and enforcing standards prevents young Soldiers from screwing up crew drills and injuring themselves or someone else. Disciplined Soldiers wear their seat belts. When was the last time you made an on-the-spot correction when a Soldier failed to wear his seat belt? Caring for Soldiers requires us to take the hard right over the easy wrong, especially once the duty day is over. Let's be role models for our young Soldiers. They're entitled to nothing less.

Is the NCO Creed our standard or just another nice thought? I prefer to think our NCOs take the creed seriously and possess a keen desire to make a positive contribution to their units and the entire Army. Each hour of every day, an NCO somewhere in the world enforces a standard, provides leadership or instills discipline in a Soldier that might prevent a future accident. These NCOs exemplify our creed and keep our Soldiers safe. Let's all remember when it comes to safety: "I will not forget, nor will I allow my comrades to forget that we are professionals, Noncommissioned Officers, leaders!"

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